

FLASH REPORT!

FLASH: CA Swine Flu Prompts Guy to Order Response

This is a joint FLASH Report issued by Cal-OSHA Reporter and Workers' Comp Executive, because of the potentially serious nature of the situation.

On the heels of an outbreak of swine flu that can be spread from human to human Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has ordered a state response designed to head off a potential pandemic. As many as 60 people have died in Mexico, many of them healthy young adults, prompting the Mexican government to close schools, museums and other public places. Six people have fallen ill with the disease in California (including two children) and another two people in Texas, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

None of the California cases involve deaths. In each case, the virus has run its course and the patients have recovered, according to California Department of Public Health (CDPH) spokesman Ronald Owens.

The governor response effort includes the following steps:

- A coordinated investigation with CDC and local health officials in San Diego and Imperial counties, where the California outbreaks occurred.
- Increased surveillance statewide for patience with flu-like symptoms.
- Deployment of CDC influenza experts to Southern California counties to assist local health departments.
- Expanded public health laboratory testing of flu specimens.
- Enhanced veterinary activities.
- · Activation of CDPH's Joint Emergency Operations Center.
- Continued communication with public health officials in Mexico.

The governor's office would not comment about closing the border and referenced the steps it's urging people to take in the news release it sent out. "We're monitoring the situation very closely. If anything new develops we will be sending out a new press release," says Lisa Page, spokeswoman for the governor's office.

CDC officials have said the U.S. cases are not a cause for major concern, but the agency has determined that the virus is being spread between humans, and health officials do not yet know how easily it can be spread. He also tells Cal-OSHA Reporter that of the 60 reported Mexican deaths, only seven have been confirmed as having been caused by swine flu.

CDC says the virus has been identified as H1N1, a type A flu. AP reports the virus contains DNA similar to avian, swine and human including elements from European and Asian swine flu viruses.

Associated Press reports the White House is monitoring the situation and that the President has been informed.

California officials stress the following common-sense steps people can take to protect themselves and others:

- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, and immediately throw it in the trash.
- · Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you are ill, because it is an effective way to spread germs.
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, especially after sneezing or coughing. Alcohol-based cleaners are
 also an effective way to kill germs.
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- . If you become ill, do not go to work or school and limit your contact with other people.

The World Health Organization has indicated it is preparing rapid containment measures including antivirals if needed to combat the situation in Mexico and the United States. International discussions are underway to determine if the pandemic alert level needs to change.

The UN says has not yet issued travel warnings to the affected parts of the United States and Mexico but will if warranted.

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